

200607Z Jul 05

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00
EAP-00	EUR-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	
LAB-01	VCE-00	NRC-00	NSAE-00	OES-00	OIC-00	PA-00	
MCC-00	GIWI-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	BBG-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	
PRM-00	DRL-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/001W		

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8608
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY ABUJA
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
NSC WASHDC
USEU BRUSSELS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000988

SIPDIS

AF FOR DAS T. WOODS
AF/S FOR B. NEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2010
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM ZI
SUBJECT: MORE BLOWS FOR INDEPENDENT MEDIA

REF: A. HARARE 663

1B. 2004 HARARE 988

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Eric Schultz under Section 1.4
b/d

Summary

11. (C) In a blow to media freedom, the Media and Information Commission (MIC) has again denied operating licenses to the semi-independent weekly Tribune newspaper and to the independent Daily News and Daily News on Sunday. The two decisions were announced July 13 and 19 respectively. The publishers of the Daily News plan to appeal the decision. The plans of the publisher of the Tribune are not yet known. End summary.

Tribune Refused Operating License

12. (SBU) On July 13, the MIC, charged with registering and regulating media outlets and journalists, announced its decision to refuse the semi-independent weekly Tribune newspaper an operating license. The Tribune had ceased operations in June 2004 when the MIC suspended it for failing to notify the MIC of a change in ownership of the company that published the Tribune (ref B). According to a July 13 government-controlled Herald newspaper story, MIC chairman Tafataona Mahoso said the MIC had turned down the Tribune because it did not have sufficient capital to resume publication and because Tribune publisher Kindness Paradza, who was suspended from ZANU-PF in 2004, said he planned to publish the paper from home. A July 13 message from the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)-Zimbabwe said Paradza had told MISA staff that he had never said he would publish from home but rather that he was keeping some of the paper's assets at his house and that all of the publishing company's communications to the MIC were very clear on these points. Paradza also told MISA that there were a number of banks that would lend the publishing company funds to resume operations. It is not clear if Paradza plans to appeal the decision.

Delayed Daily News Decision Also Negative

13. (U) On July 19, the Herald published a front-page story stating that the MIC had denied an operating license to Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), publishers of the Daily News and the Daily News on Sunday, on the grounds that it had previously violated sections of the Access to

Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) in continuing to publish without MIC registration and employing unaccredited journalists. The MIC had been considering this application by ANZ after the Supreme Court in March set aside MIC's earlier refusal and ordered ANZ to submit a new application (ref A).

14. (C) ANZ attorney Mordecai Mahlangu told Embassy staff that the judgment was political and was not in accordance with AIPPA or the Supreme Court's ruling. Mahlangu was particularly disturbed by the fact that the MIC notified neither ANZ nor its attorneys before the Herald article ran. He said that MIC chair Mahoso should have recused himself from the decision due to his obvious bias and a previous Supreme Court ruling ordering his recusal. The Herald article reported that ANZ had requested Mahoso's recusal on those grounds but that Mahoso could not recuse himself because he was not biased and because the Supreme Court had made no such ruling. Mahoso planned to file an appeal with the Administrative Court within two days.

Comment

15. (C) In spite of its increasingly precarious financial position and its deepening international isolation, the MIC rulings are clear evidence that the GOZ is in no mood yet to make any concessions to its critics) domestic or external. The regime's overriding priority remains command and control of Zimbabwe, including continued tight constraints on media freedom, without regard to the long-term costs and consequences. End comment.

SCHULTZ

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